

Falling Leaves by **the_strange_bookworm**

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Summary:

Summer ended too soon. Autumn passed too quickly. Winter moved too slowly. But in the end, spring came at last.

A drabble about Jim Hopper's two little girls: the one he lost and the one he found.

Falling Leaves

Author's Note:

HI IT'S THE BOOKWORM! This is something I wrote very randomly that turned out pretty good. The Hopper family was such an amazing dynamic in S2 and I hope this can bring them justice. Enjoy!

Summer.

Jim Hopper's summer was Sara. It was sunlight shining through the evergreen leaves and reflecting off of her blonde pigtails. It was her laughter, echoing through memories of playing with her in the park. It was sitting on the swings eating ice cream; chocolate for him, cookies and cream for her. When she ran and ran, chasing the wind, until her breath left her lungs and left her gasping for air.

Summer ended too soon.

Autumn.

The leaves were falling when he came to the lab, Sara in his arms on a portable respirator. The sun was fading fast. He had heard whispers of a drug that could save his little girl and begged for this opportunity. He didn't even know the chances, he didn't want to know the chances. He just knew that he would do anything to stop the leaves from falling.

He stayed with her through it all. He held her hand and read her *Anne of Green Gables* and wore her favorite blue hairtie because she couldn't. The IV dripped around the clock, but everytime Jim looked at his daughter he saw the leaves of autumn withering away and the frost drawing in. Then one day, the heart monitor flatlined and he held his wife while they both fell apart, as the last leaf fell. Sara was gone.

Autumn passed too quickly.

Winter.

Jim felt colder than he ever did before. Sara had left and took with her his heart and joy. His wife left as he stopped caring and started drinking. Indianapolis Police let him go and soon, he was out of options. Again, Hawkins was his last option. Things moved slow there, helping to numb his mind and numb the pain. He knew he was meant for more than this. But he decided he was done. He was out of leaves.

Winter moved too slowly.

November of 1983 brought a strange warmth that came in an unexpected form. A boy gone missing. And not just any boy, *Joyce Byers'* boy, Will. Something reawoke inside of him when Joyce came to his office begging him to find her son. He realized, he could finally do something. He couldn't save Sara, but maybe he could save Will.

He had no idea what he was getting himself into.

A week later, Jim had gone through his own government and an actual hell dimension to bring Will Byers home. He took time to enjoy the warmth, then readied himself for the return to the darkness and cold. Not even realizing the snow around him was melting with every plastic-wrapped egg he left in the woods.

Then he found her. Alone and freezing in the woods. He took her to his grandfather's old cabin. "This will be your new home," he said.

"Home?" She seemed to like the sound of that. He liked the sound of it too.

It was the first leaf.

Spring.

Now, more than a year later, Jim Hopper watched a curly-haired 13 year old girl laugh with her friends in the woods. He stood on the porch, cigarette in hand, looking up at the branches above him that were thick with young, bright green leaves.

It was El. It was El who brought the sunshine back. Who somehow cleared away the ache in his heart to make a space for herself. Every day he spent with her brought a new leaf to the bare branches he had known for so long, increasing in number until they were full again.

She still thought that he saved her that snowy night. The truth is that *she* saved *him*.

Watching them through the tree trunks, he saw El levitate herself up onto a low tree branch to join her friends. "Don't tire yourself out, Ellie!" he yelled to her, and got a nod and thumbs up in reply. He sighed, remembering someone else who loved climbing trees.

Sure, El was no Sara. That was the truth, plain and simple. But she was a chance, another chance to be a father and watch his kid grow up into someone amazing. Because yes, she was his little girl as much as Sara was (and still is). They'd fought soldiers and interdimensional monsters to make certain...

That spring was here to stay.

Author's Note:

All comments welcome! :)